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GIVEN BY

*William A. Brown.*





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1900

BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

Massachusetts School Suffrage Association.

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The School Suffrage movement in Massachusetts arose from the failure to secure the re-election of Miss Abby W. May on the School Board of Boston. Judge Russell, who was much interested in the matter, declared that two thousand women voters were needed in the city "to save the schools," since the School Committee had become so largely a stepping-stone to political preferment. A petition was sent to the legislature, asking for the extension of school suffrage to women; and a hearing was granted, at which many old citizens were present, some of whom were not in favor of general suffrage. The result was that on the 10th of April, 1879, a bill enabling women to vote for School Committee was passed by the legislature of Massachusetts,— 129 ays to 69 noes.

On the 15th of November following a meeting of women voters of Boston passed the following resolutions at Freeman Place Chapel:—

*Whereas* it is recognized by all good citizens that the schools are the most important of our institutions, since in them are trained morally and intellectually our youth, who are to become the citizens on whom depends, for good or for ill, the future of our republic, therefore,—

*Resolved*, That we earnestly request our fellow-citizens of all political parties to bring forward as candidates for the School Committee only persons known to be of high moral character and of good education, with time and spirit for the public service and,—

*Whereas* we believe that the presence of women on our School Committee is both desirable and needful for the best good of our schools, therefore,—

*Resolved*, That we ask the men of all political parties, in making up their tickets for the next election, to put upon them the names of two or three women as candidates for the School Committee.

This meeting was the cradle of the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association, and the above resolutions seem to contain in a nutshell the future policy of the organization.

Three days later a so-called Committee of Conference of the women voters of Boston met at No. 5 Park Street, and organized, with Miss Abby W. May as chairman, and Mrs. Emily Talbot, secretary. So vigorous was this little body in its early days, that between this date of November 18 and December 8 no less than eight committee meetings were held, besides one general meeting of women voters, in preparation for the election of December 9. A woman's ticket was prepared, and three women nominated on it. A conference was held with the Nominating Committee of the Republican party, the other parties having refused the desired conference. That first year 894 women voted in Boston.

At a meeting of women voters on December 6 it was voted to constitute the Conference Committee of twelve a permanent committee to take charge of School Suffrage in both city and State, and to invite those women to join this committee who had signed the letter of the previous May, urging women to vote.

At the last meeting of this Conference Committee, on December 30, Miss May gave an important report on the subject of School Suffrage for Women, speaking in detail of the recent election in all its aspects, and claiming that the result, although at first sight a failure, was really a long step toward success in several ways. She mentions three:—

“First, it proved that there are in Boston, and ready to serve on schools, women whose high character, whose intelligence, and whose faithfulness to duty are known to be so great that they are recognized as worthy to be honored with the high responsibility, and are sure to meet it well.

“Second, it shows that the political parties of the city are willing to nominate women as members of the school board.

“Third, there was proof that the determination of the women to vote for good candidates only had its effect on the nominations of the political parties. It is now possible to

anticipate that the days of mere office-seeking are near an end, so far as the School Board is concerned."

If these words of Miss May have proved to be true, in some measure at least, of each election that has since taken place, who shall venture to say that School Suffrage for women is a failure?

In accordance with a vote of women voters at a meeting of Jan. 13, 1880, a committee of five was appointed to draw up a constitution, which was adopted on January 27. Thus the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association was formally organized, and a board of officers chosen, with Miss May as President; Mrs. Cheney, Vice-President; Miss Rogers, Secretary; Mrs. Whitman, Treasurer; and seven Directors.

Hitherto the activity of the women had been confined to Boston; but now the organization of work in the State began, and a circular was issued to secure co-operation among women. Each of the fourteen counties of the State was given in charge to one of the Directors for supervision of the work. A second document was also sent out, containing requests for information on many points connected with registration and School Suffrage. Lecturers were sent by the Association into country towns, and articles on the subject published in the newspapers.

The special city work was entrusted to a committee of five, which was instructed to form Ward Committees; and a so-called "city document" was published with information about voting.

A school ticket was made up and presented to a meeting of registered women, when it was adopted with some changes, in company with a set of resolutions. There was but one woman's name on the ticket; but it was a proud moment for the Boston women voters when they learned that this woman, Miss Lucia M. Peabody, retained her place on the School Committee this year by means of the votes of the women.

At the second annual meeting, in January, 1881, a set of resolutions was adopted, whose aim was to increase the effi-

ciency of the Association. Lecturers were again sent out during the year to arouse interest in the smaller towns of the State. Miss May's admirable little pamphlet, "What can we do by our Votes for the Good of the Schools?" was published in June, and widely circulated.

In March a memorial was sent to the legislature, asking for changes in the law regulating the registration of women, and this resulted in the passage of some amendments.

The year was rich in meetings; for, besides the usual monthly meetings and a public meeting in Anniversary Week, a conference of teachers was held, and two meetings of registered women voters. Two women were nominated on the woman's ticket in Boston, Miss Peabody and Mrs. Fifield; and the women voters again had the satisfaction of learning that their votes had secured the re-election of Miss Peabody. The membership of the Association in 1881 was about 250. The number of women registering in Massachusetts was 3,349; those voting, 1,571.

The close of 1881 marks an important change in the policy and methods of the Association, since at the meeting of registered women voters on December 10, a committee was appointed to choose a City Committee, consisting of one woman from each ward, to take charge of the School Suffrage work in Boston. Hitherto, as we have seen, the city work had been under the direct charge of the Association.

During 1882 the plan of holding lectures in different towns was continued, and other local work carried on. Inquiries were made of the city authorities of Boston with regard to the need for re-registration; and a petition was presented to the legislature, asking that lists of women qualified to vote for School Committee should be published without the necessity of re-registration.

The attention of the board was, however, largely concentrated upon an attempt to adjust itself to new conditions, and to work harmoniously with the Ward and City Committee. Conferences with this body were held with regard to methods of work, a point of disagreement being the advisability of issu-



ing a separate woman's ticket for School Committee before the party nominations were made. It was finally decided to request the Nominating Committee (chosen at a meeting of registered women voters) to simply present the name of one woman to the different parties before their nominations were made, urging their acceptance of it. The wisdom of this policy was justified by the event; for Mrs. Fifield was triumphantly elected by 40,785 votes, the largest number cast, and the election of one of the men, Mr. Hyde, was also due to the women's votes. The women registered in Massachusetts for 1882 were 2,951; those voting, 1,346.

The year of 1883 did not, unfortunately, witness any diminution of the friction existing between the city organization and the general Association. The Ward and City Committee concentrated its energies at this time upon selecting as candidates for School Committee those alone who were known to favor the Temperance cause; while the Association, without underestimating the gravity of the Temperance problem, steadily adhered to the policy of retaining those retiring members of the School Board who had done good and faithful service in the past. With such conflicting methods, the very earnestness of both parties made unity of action impossible; and the various conferences which took place during the year only served to estrange the two bodies more completely. Meanwhile, more or less activity was displayed in arranging lectures for the cause in different places. 3,138 women were registered in Massachusetts, and 1,469 voted.

At the annual meeting in January, 1884, Miss Mary F. Eastman and Col. T. W. Higginson were deputed to prepare a course of reading for the use of School Suffrage Clubs and parlor meetings; and at a subsequent annual meeting a committee, which afterwards took the matter in charge, reported a list of books suitable for this object.

This year, as well as the last, rejoiced in several conferences with the City Committee, at one of which Messrs. Godfrey Morse, Darwin E. Ware, and George S. Hale kindly came, and gave their views on the best methods of work for

the coming year. Another conference was held to discuss the propriety of investigating the private character of the nominees for School Committee, no conclusion being arrived at. There were also two public meetings held during this year.

In November the Directors of the Association registered a vote of disapproval of the course of the registered women in dropping a valuable member of the School Board from their ticket ; and a conference was held with the " minority " members of the body of women voters, in the interests of the present situation. The Association at this time numbered 125 members. 3,778 women were registered in Massachusetts ; 1,896 voted.

1885 was a comparatively uneventful year. In January, at the annual meeting, a resolution was adopted, asking, in substance, that the existing arrangements with regard to assessment, poll-tax, etc., shall be applied to women in the same way as to men ; and it was voted to petition the legislature in accordance with the resolution.

A new document, with regard to the importance of the election of women on school committees, was issued and circulated. A committee of the Board engaged in quite an extensive correspondence with prominent persons throughout the cities and towns of the State, asking whether anything could be done to arouse an interest in School Suffrage. The answers received were somewhat discouraging, as, indeed, was the outlook in the city itself ; for, although the number of women voters in Boston at the election was 2,238, double that of the previous year, there was no longer any woman on the School Board. A larger number of women were registered this year in Massachusetts than on any previous year, 5,260 having registered, and 3,227 voting. Early in 1886 a circular was issued and sent to all papers in the State, urging the women to vote for School Committee at the March elections. It was possibly a direct effect of this circular that women were elected on the school boards in several towns where no women had ever been chosen before, and at all events we

must believe that the work of the Association was partially instrumental in producing this desirable result.

At the public May meeting in Wesleyan Hall, somewhat of a new departure was made in introducing topics of general educational interest, but not bearing especially on School Suffrage as such. These topics were Industrial Education, Physical Training, and Morals and Manners.

The Association and the cause of School Suffrage in general sustained a severe loss this year in the death of Miss Lucretia Crocker, the only woman Supervisor. Despite renewed efforts, the election of Mrs. Fifield was not secured. 4,219 women were registered in Massachusetts; 1,911 voted.

At the annual meeting in January, 1887, Miss May, owing to continued illness, sent in her resignation from the Presidency of the Association. It was not accepted by the Directors, who could not bear to put another in her place while there was any prospect that she might return to fill it. So the Vice-President, Mrs. Cheney, was requested to perform the duties of the office.

At this same meeting resolutions were adopted offering two prizes, of \$50 and \$25 respectively, for the two best essays on the subject of the duties devolving upon women in consequence of their right of School Suffrage. At the next Directors' meeting a committee was appointed to take this matter in charge; and it was finally decided to award the second prize to Miss Anna Gardner, of Nantucket, whose essay was printed as a leaflet for distribution. Nine essays were sent in, and no first prize was awarded.

Two excellent meetings in the interest of School Suffrage were held in Newton under the auspices and at the expense of the Association; and the Association also bore a part in the expenses of the Ward and City Committee in their efforts to secure a large vote from the women of Boston. The successful election of Mrs. Fifield, and the fact that the Boston School Board had chosen a woman, Mrs. Hopkins, to fill the place left vacant by Miss Crocker on the Board of Supervisors, made the year an encouraging one for the work-

ers in School Suffrage. 3,892 women were registered in Massachusetts, and 1,912 voted.

Early in the year 1888 Mr. George Pellew, at the request of the Committee on Prizes, prepared for the Association a pamphlet on "A Neglected Duty of the Women of Massachusetts," which was widely circulated. It was supplied free to the Suffrage Leagues in the neighborhood, and distributed from the *Woman's Journal* office, a notice being inserted in the paper that copies would be sent to those asking for them. Requests were even received from a number of clubs in New York State.

In March a delegate was sent to represent the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association at the Women's International Council in Washington.

This year of 1888 was destined to prove the most eventful of all years in the life of the Association, although it is difficult for those who were not on the spot to realize the intense excitement that prevailed during that autumn and winter. The anti-Catholic feeling had become so intense, and the antagonism it aroused was so strong, that ten times the usual number of women presented themselves at the Registrar's office, and the Association found itself suddenly brought face to face with a practical problem. Early in October a Literary Committee was formed to furnish frequent short articles to the papers on the duty of tax-paying women to vote at the next election. On the 23d of October a special meeting of the Board was called "to consider the sudden increase of voters in Massachusetts, and the duty of guiding this new power rightly"; and it was decided to call a public meeting shortly before the election, to give an opportunity for a calm and fair discussion of the questions involved. This meeting was held in the Meionaon, speeches being made by Edwin D. Mead, Rev. William I. Haven, C. C. Coffin, Miss Mary A. Greene, and Mr. John E. Fitzgerald; and a set of resolutions drawn up by Mrs. Cheney was passed.

A special meeting of *members* of the Association was also called on December 5, to consider what action should be

aken in reference to a School Committee ticket, in view of the fact that the Ward and City Committee had voted to issue no separate ticket, but to act with the so-called "Committee of One Hundred." It was decided to confer with the Nominating Committee (whose report the City Committee had declined to accept), and, profiting by their experience, to issue a ticket and mail the ballot, together with a circular explaining the action of the Association, to the twenty thousand registered women voters of Boston. This was done, the expense being met by private subscription of friends of the cause.

This extraordinary increase in the women voters was not limited to Boston; for in 1888, 28,066 women were registered in Massachusetts, of whom 24,992 voted. It is gratifying to learn that this increase in the exercise of suffrage by women was productive of no disturbance. The Boston *Herald* magnanimously remarks of the polling day in Boston: "Not a single case of rowdyism or even discourtesy marked the appearance of the women at the polls: they came, saw, and conquered. It was a great day for the disenthralled sex."

In the midst of the anxiety and excitement previous to the election the Association received the most terrible blow that could have fallen upon it, in the death of its invaluable and revered President, Miss Abby W. May, who died on the 30th of November. She had sent in her resignation for the second time at the last annual meeting; but the Directors had again refused to accept it, and had appointed two Vice-Presidents to perform the duties of the office until she should be restored to it. At the annual meeting which now followed, in January, 1889, resolutions were adopted expressing the grief of the Directors, and their appreciation of Miss May's services and noble example.

The Ward and City Committee had disbanded after the election; and a new one had been organized, with which the Massachusetts Association did not feel that it could work in harmony. A number of persons, however, thought that the city work could be aided by a separate organization; and, after several conferences with the Directors of the Massachu-

setts School Suffrage Association, on March 27 a committee of nine persons was appointed, with full powers, to formulate a platform for a new organization for city work. This organization was eventually completed, under the name of the Citizens' Public School Union, several members of which are also members of the Board of this Association. The Massachusetts School Suffrage Association has, however, continued its care of the city work, as well as of that in all the rest of the State.

A new law was passed in this year, obliging the assessors to ask at every house for the names of women desirous of voting; and the Board voted in April to print a number of application blanks for women desiring to be assessed.

At the public meeting in May the working of the new Australian Ballot system was explained, and the teaching of religion in the public schools discussed. A new set of resolutions, expressing the sentiments and aims of the Association, was also read.

In November it was voted, in conference with the Committee of Nine, to publish Mr. Grimké's summary of the action of the legislature of 1889 with regard to the education of minors in Massachusetts, together with some introductory remarks; and this was afterwards done in the newspapers.

At another conference meeting it was decided that it would be wiser to indorse but six names for School Committee, including those of two women, and to publish this list, with introductory remarks, in the papers.

On April 3, 1890, after the Association, as such, had passed its tenth birthday, it was decided that it ought to be legally incorporated; and a committee was formed to take the necessary steps. The Charter of Corporation was subsequently obtained, and the officers of the Association duly sworn.

At the request of the Public School Union the Board undertook the circulation of Mr. Parkman's pamphlet, "Our Common Schools." 300 copies of Rev. Charles F. Dole's pamphlet, with regard to the teaching of religion in the public schools, were also received for distribution from the branch

society of Jamaica Plain, which had printed it at its own expense.

On the 2d of December the members of the Association were invited to meet with the Directors to consider the names and candidates for the Boston School Board. Eight names were accepted, including one woman's; and it is a fitting conclusion of the year to chronicle the re-election of Mrs. Field.

In 1891 it was decided to again omit the public meeting in May, and the time of the annual meeting was changed from January to November.

A committee of three was formed to correspond with women in the country towns, and interest them in School Suffrage. Excellent work was done in this direction during the summer, correspondence being carried on with eight towns. Another plan which originated in connection with this, that of issuing a circular to leagues, suffragists, and women friendly to the movement throughout the State, was finally carried into effect in the following February, when about four hundred such circulars were sent out. Valuable work was also done during the summer in the distribution of literature. 5,000 copies of Mr. Pellew's pamphlet were sent in July to a club in this State for campaign work; and in August one hundred of the different documents were forwarded to a town in Michigan, where they aroused so much interest that for the first time two women were elected on the School Board!

In the autumn a committee of five was appointed to confer with the Nominating Committee of the Public School Union, with regard to candidates for the coming election in Boston.

It had long been proposed to have a history of the whole School Suffrage movement prepared by the Association; but the project had not been carried out, owing to the difficulty of finding a competent person to undertake the task. Finally, it was decided to limit it to a history of School Suffrage in *Massachusetts*; and the matter was left in the hands of the Secretary, with the request that she prepare a *résumé* of this

history, to be read at the annual meeting in November. This was done; and the result, slightly supplemented and enlarged, is embodied in the present pamphlet.

In 1892 an important change took place with regard to the voting of women. On February 2, a hearing, attended by many members of the Association, was given at the State House, with regard to relieving women of all taxes as a prerequisite for voting. At length, on the 8th of June, a law was passed, abolishing the poll-tax for women in Massachusetts, and placing them in every respect on an equality with men in School Suffrage.

During the summer a number of copies were purchased and circulated of an address made by Rev. A. D. Mayo before the Jamaica Plain Branch Association, and printed by that body. One hundred copies of Mr. Pellew's pamphlet were also circulated.

In the fall it was thought advisable by the Directors to make an effort to reach the women of the State through the various women's clubs; and for this purpose a brief circular was prepared, calling attention to the greater facility in voting in consequence of the new law. Copies of this were distributed to many clubs before the fall election.

As regards the number of women on the school boards of Massachusetts, the outlook for the year was very encouraging. Exclusive of the four women on the Boston School Board, there appear to have been, in 112 cities and towns, 157 serving in this capacity, making a gain of 19 over the number reported for the year previous.\* At the annual meeting of the Association in November, a number of these school committee women were present from different parts of the State, and gave interesting testimony to the vigor and activity of the women on the school boards, their accounts being supplemented by extracts from the letters of many others who were unable to attend the meeting.

\* Owing to elements of uncertainty in the official statistics, it is possible that this number may not be perfectly exact; but, from the best information obtained, it appears to be correct, and is the largest number yet reported for any one year.



During the present year of 1893 the Association is hoping carry out a project it has long had at heart, the preparation a volume containing short biographical memoirs of Miss Abby W. May and Miss Lucretia Crocker, to both of whom the School Suffrage cause is so largely indebted. The President of the Association, Mrs. Ednah D. Cheney, has consented to edit the material, which will be sent to her from any different sources ; and it is to be hoped that all friends of the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association, as well as of the public schools, will feel an interest in securing a copy of this volume.

EVA CHANNING,  
*Secretary of Massachusetts School  
Suffrage Association.*

AMAICA PLAIN, MASS.,  
April, 1893.

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## APPENDIX.

### I.

The following By-laws, adopted on April 12, 1890, after the incorporation of the Association, supersede the original Constitution of 1880 :—

#### NAME.

The name shall be The Massachusetts School Suffrage Association.

#### OBJECT.

The object of this Association shall be to increase the interest in educational work by means of lectures, public meetings, and distribution of pamphlets and other printed or written matter, and in other ways to endeavor to make School Suffrage effective for the best interests of the public schools of Massachusetts.

#### OFFICERS.

The officers shall be a President, Vice-Presidents, one or more Secretaries, a Treasurer, and a Board of Directors, numbering not less than seven nor more than twenty-four.

The officers shall be chosen annually by the Association, shall have power to fill vacancies occurring during the year.

All officers shall be *ex-officio* members of the Board of Directors. Five Directors shall constitute a quorum.

The duties of officers shall be those usually belonging to their respective offices.

#### MEMBERSHIP.

The vote of a majority of Directors present at any meeting may admit to membership such persons as desire to join the Association and contribute to its funds.

#### MEETINGS.

The annual meeting shall be held in Boston in November. Other meetings may be held elsewhere at the discretion of the Board.

#### METHODS OF WORK.

The Directors shall have charge of all business of the Association.

They may form new societies and establish communication with those already existing.

They may hold meetings, public or private, and may print and circulate such matter as they shall deem useful.

They may appoint local committees, or aid those already existing, to take charge of School Suffrage at elections.

#### AMENDMENTS.

The Constitution or By-laws may be amended at an annual meeting, notice of intention to amend being given with the call of the meeting.

#### II.

The following Resolutions were adopted by the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association on May 28, 1890:

*Resolved*, That it is the right and the duty of parents to educate their children so as to prepare them to become loyal, industrious, and useful citizens of the commonwealth in which they live.

*Resolved*, That the State should assist all parents to fulfil this duty by establishing a system of free schools which shall provide the opportunity of instruction for all children.

*Resolved*, That whenever parents shall carelessly or wilfully neglect to secure such education for their children, either by sending them to public schools or by supplying private instruction of suitable character, the State has the right to enforce the attendance of such children at the public schools.

*Resolved*, That we recognize the right of private instruction, but yet believe that it is for the good of the community that the children of all classes should be educated at the public schools.

*Resolved*, That the State has no right to dictate to the private school the teachers, text-books, or methods to be used, but only require sufficient amount of elementary instruction to be given to fit the child to discharge the duties of a citizen.

*Resolved*, That in connection with the factory law the attainments of the children can be ascertained either by examination of the child or by an inspection of the school it is certified to attend.

*Resolved*, That the State should recognize no church as having paramount authority over citizens. A church is a voluntary association of citizens or a body incorporated under law. Its members are responsible to the laws, and the commands of the church do not exonerate them from punishment for any offence against the peace and order of the commonwealth.

*Resolved*, That all colleges, universities, and other institutions of learning are equally responsible to the law, and have no exclusive privileges of judgment by their own tribunals.

*Resolved*, That all religious ordinances or forms should be excluded from the public schools, but may be permitted in the private schools according to the wishes of the individuals or authorities maintaining such schools.

In a community like ours, where there is no established church and all forms of religion are equal before the law, there should be no effort at representations of religions; but care should be taken to treat all persons with respect, and not to offend any by ridicule or censure of their opinions.

*Resolved*, That the principles of morals and the sentiments of kindness, truth, temperance, and justice should be carefully inculcated; but the methods of doing so must be such as not to arouse controversy and ill-will among pupils, parents, and teachers.

*Resolved*, That the moral welfare of the schools depends mainly upon the personal character of the committee who control them and the teachers who have charge of them. The school committee should therefore be composed of men and women chosen not

according to their political or theological opinions, but whose intellectual and practical ability and high moral character fit them for their work. Teachers should be appointed solely on their merits, and their services should be so well paid and honorably recognized as to secure for the schools the ablest men and women in the community.

*Resolved*, That, where English is the recognized language of the community and government, the State has the right to require that all children shall be taught to use it.

### III.

The following documents have been circulated by the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association:—

“Election of Women on School Committee,” by Abby W. May; “What can we do by our Votes for the Good of the Schools?” by Abby W. May; “School Committee Suffrage,” by Anna Gardner; “A Neglected Duty of the Women of Massachusetts,” by George Pellet; “Religion in the Schools,” by Rev. Charles F. Dole; “Our Common Schools,” by Francis Parkman; “The Opportunity and Obligation of Women in School Suffrage,” by Rev. A. D. Mayo.

The Massachusetts School Suffrage Association is glad to assist those interested in its work and aims with information and literature on the subject.



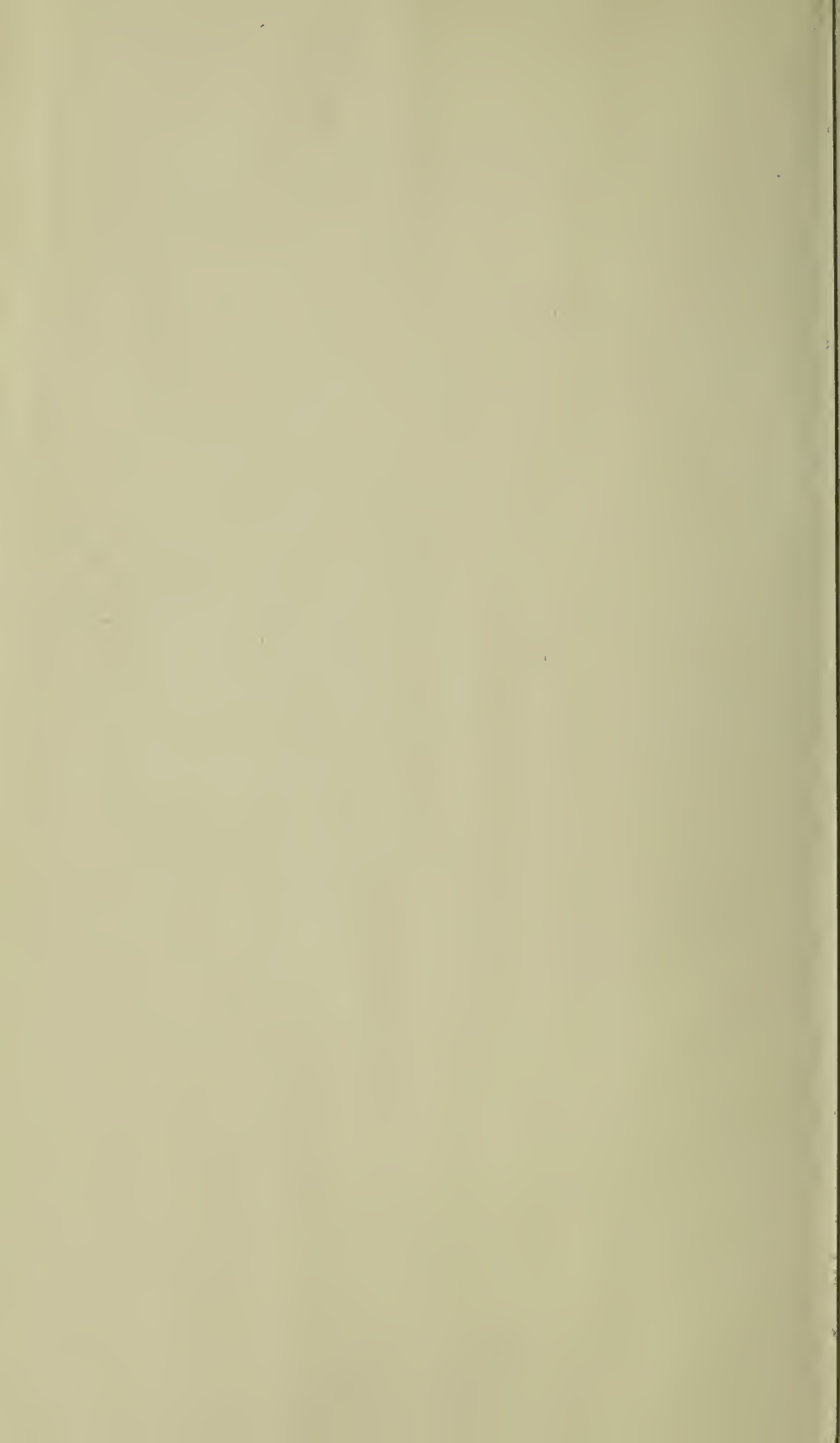


































































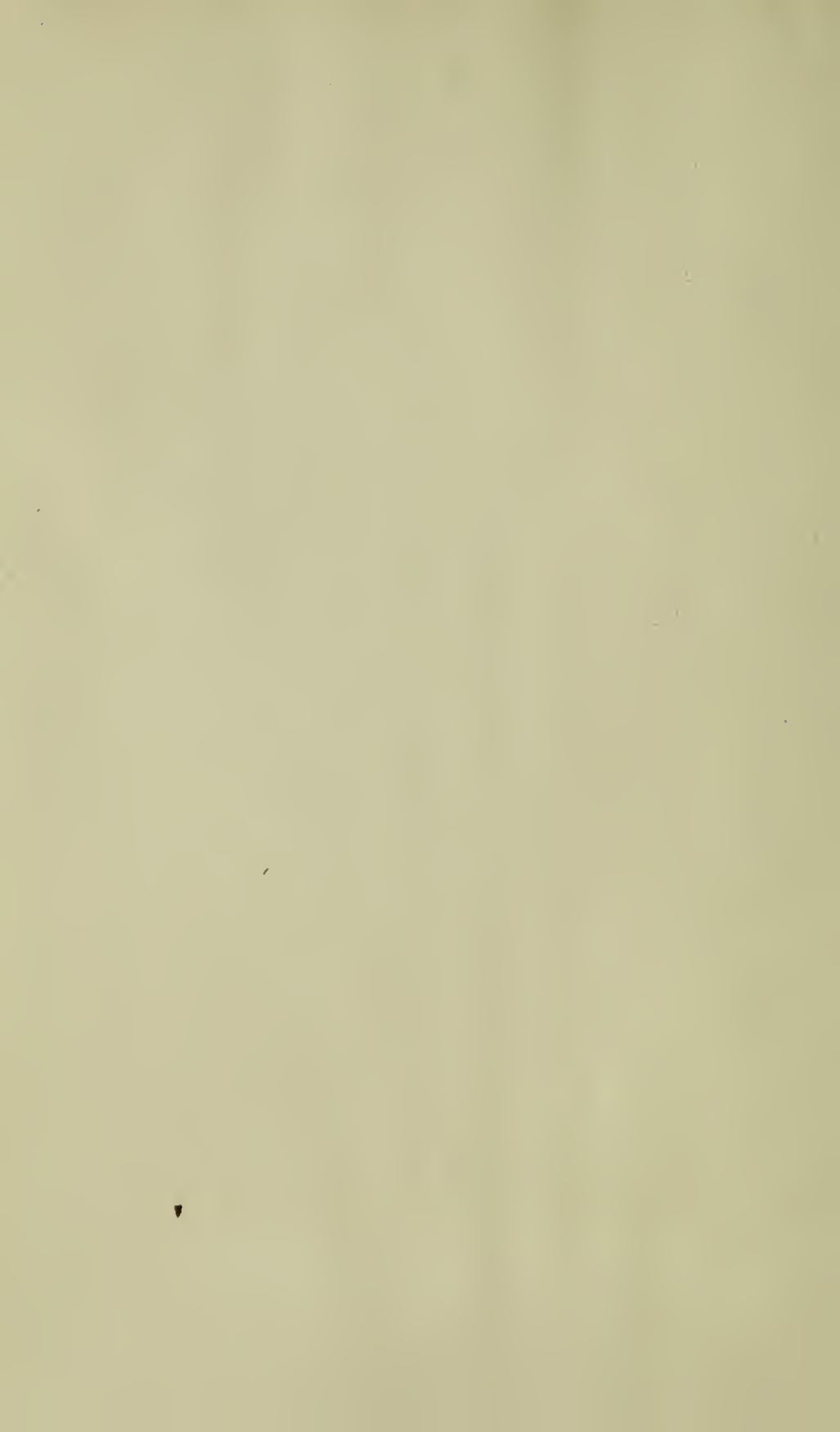
























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